

**Do Poverty Interventions Address Gender Issues? Reflections from
Research in the Departments of Education in a Kenyan Province and
District.**

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Abstract

Education has been found to have positive effects in the reduction of poverty. In both rural and urban areas, the level of education of the household head is related with the incidence, depth and severity of poverty. In Kenya the poor are disproportionately less educated and less skilled than the non poor. Again the poor are more likely to be unable to access social services such as treated water, adequate sanitation, medical services and other services. Other characteristics of the poor include landlessness, reliance on subsistence farming and large households. The government of Kenya has in the recent years introduced a number of poverty reduction interventions targeting households and the education sector. The introduction of free primary education in Kenya in 2003 led to increase in primary school enrolments but still there many-school going age children (most of them girls) who are out of school. Kenya’s informal settlements are home to thousands of low income households and some of the schools that serve these areas are not supported by Free Primary Education grants resulting to poor capacity to serve the targeted children. This paper looks at the implementation of education and poverty reduction strategies by officials in provincial and district education and highlights how difficult it is for them to maintain a focus on gender equality. Based on qualitative and participatory research it explores the challenges of linking gender, education and poverty reduction.

Introduction

Kenya is a country with vibrant economic activity coupled with high levels of poverty and inequality. It is estimated that around 17 million of Kenya’s 36 million still live in poverty with four of Kenya’s 67 rural districts having poverty rates above 80%. In terms of gender equality and empowerment of women, Kenya has not done well. It is ranked 111 out of 136 countries on the UN Gender Development Index. The illiteracy rates among women are still high (40%). Access to resources such as land for women is still limited with only 4% of the land belonging to women. Women’s representation in parliaments is only 7% which is below the African average of 17%. (Department for International Development, Kenya (DFIDK) Country Assistance Plan-Framing Paper 2008,p.2).

In 2002 it was estimated that the poverty levels stood at 56 percent of the population. Of great concern is the dramatic increase of the population living under the poverty line in urban areas, as illustrated by a near 90 percent increase between 1994 and 1997. The percentage of people below poverty line is projected to increase to 65.9 percent in 2015 if the current trend continues. The poverty line adopted in Kenya is US\$17 and US\$36 per month per adult in the rural areas respectively. Behind this increases are a number of factors including primarily low economic growth from 1994 that culminated into a 0.3 per cent contraction in 2000, inflation and rise in consumer prices . Bad governance, corruption and structural adjustment program have significantly contributed to the poor economic performance. Kenya is ranked among the top ten low income economies with a high concentration of income amongst its highest earners (10 percent controlling 35 percent of national income).The share of consumption of the lowest income quintile rose from 4.9 percent to 6.0 percent, while that of the highest income quintile dropped from 56.9 percent to 47.9 percent between 1982 and 1997. The gap between the quintile is expected to narrow by 2015 but it will still be wide (Republic of Kenya 2004).

Poverty remains a major impediment to fulfillment of basic needs of Kenyans especially women and children. On the one hand, the high incidence of poverty has greatly undermined the government's ability to address the pressing needs in such critical sectors as primary health care, nutrition and basic education. On the other hand, poor health and malnutrition serve to entrench poverty due to low productivity.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze some of the poverty reduction initiatives being implemented in the education sector with an attempt to explore how they address gender issues at the provincial and district levels. The paper begins with a description of some of the anti poverty intervention by the government and moves on to describe the research on which the paper is based. Some of the grassroot anti poverty interventions implemented at the provincial and district departments of education are examined in detail based on the interviewees' perceptions. A conclusion is made and suggestions given on the way forward.

Poverty reduction Interventions by the government

This government has demonstrated its commitment to reducing the unacceptable high level of poverty and consequently starvation and hunger through various initiatives. Some of these interventions include:

Interventions geared towards poverty reduction

National Poverty Eradication Plan (NPEP, 1999-2015): One of the objectives of the plan is to “strengthen the capacities of the poor and vulnerable groups to earn income, narrow gender and geographical disparities and engender a healthy, better educated and a more productive population”.

Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP 2001-2004): The Paper reaffirms the commitment of the government to address gender issues by providing an engendered poverty diagnosis.

The Economic Recovery Strategy (ERS 2003-2007): It adopts the approach of revamping growth, raising productivity, facilitating private investments and alleviating unemployment while simultaneously addressing the socio-economic agenda and equity concerns. The ERS recognizes that women and men have differential needs, constraints, options, incentives and expectations regarding the outcomes and impacts on macro-economic management. The Investment Programme for ERS (IP-ERS) which facilitate implementation, monitoring and evaluation of ERS provides an opportunity for genderising the outcome indicators of the same.

Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF): It recognizes the need to introduce gender indicators in the macro framework and encourages a paradigm shift in resource allocation mechanisms.

Annual Budget Strategy Paper (BSP): It is formulated to provide estimates of available resources and set firm ministerial ceilings through providing guidance to government ministries and departments on aligning public spending patterns with stated national priorities. This enhances efficiency in public spending, provides an opportunity for gender responsive programming and gender focused implementation.

Vision 2030: It identifies the best options for fulfilling Kenya's enormous potential to realize the goal of becoming a middle income, prosperous country, providing a high quality of life for all our people. This will be achieved by building on the competitive advantages in the key sectors of the economy to substantially expand Kenya's share of the global market. The Vision 2030 singles out three pillars on which to realize this goal. The first pillar seeks to ensure achievement and sustainability of an average economic

growth of over 10 percent per annum over the next twenty-five years. The second pillar seeks to build a just and cohesive society, with equitable social development, and a clean and secure environment. The third pillar aims at producing a democratic political system that nurtures issue-based politics, the rule of law, and protects all the rights and freedoms of every individual and society.

In relation to gender equality and women's empowerment, the government of Kenya gender mainstreaming Plan of Action (2008) addresses itself to the nine areas of the National Policy on Gender and Development and the Sessional paper no. 2 of May 2006 on Gender Equality and Development. These are:

- Removal of impediments to equal access to economic and employment opportunities for men and women;
- Poverty eradication and promotion of sustainable livelihoods through removal of obstacles to women's access to and control over reproductive assets, wealth economic opportunities shelter and safe drinking water ;
- Legal reforms to guarantee Kenyan men and women equality before the law, as provided for in the Constitution and under the obligations of the Kenyan State in international law;
- Gender parity in political participation and decision-making at all levels
- Elimination of gender disparities in education and training to enhance and sustain gender parity in access, retention, transition and performance in education for both boys and girls, women and men;
- Creating short term employment for women and youths through use of labour intensive activities such as tree planting, flood control and roads. Created by public works programs.
- Introduction of youth enterprise development fund to provide credit to the youths group projects
- Facilitate youths to get employment a broad.
- Rehabilitating and building at least one youth empowerment center in every constituency countrywide. To offer employment information, career development, HIV/Aids education/ counseling/ leisure and recreation (Republic of Kenya, 2007).

Interventions in the education sector

In order to increase access to primary education the government introduced Free Primary Education (FPE) in 2003. After these introduction the total pupil enrolment in standard 1 to 8 increased from 6.06 million in 2002 to 7.4 million in 2004 and further to 7.6 million in 2006 and 8.2 million in 2007. The Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) at primary level increased from 99.3% in 2002 to 107.6% in 2007.

Access at primary school level has reached almost gender parity at the national level. In 2002, the proportion of girls was 49.3%, 48.9% in 2003, and 49% in 2006. In 2007, about 8,211,269 pupils [comprising of 4,012,176 girls and 4,199,093 boys] were enrolled. Enrolment at primary level, however, continues to experience sharp regional disparities, With particularly low rates among girls in arid and semi-arid regions

Despite the generally high enrolment rates at primary school level, output and quality assessment studies reflect problems of quality in teaching and learning, though gradual positive changes have been noted. Schools now receive teaching /learning materials through the FPE programme. The positive change is evidenced by the improvement of the Kenya certificate of primary education [K.C.P.E] examination performance over the last 3 years. However, regions with low enrolment rates are still recording poor K.C.P.E performance.

The FPE has been exerting pressure on enrolment in secondary school. This led to an increase in transition rate from primary to secondary from 46.5% in 2003 to 60% in 2007.

Gross enrolment at secondary level is targeted to reach 70% in 2008, a target that is likely to be achieved following the introduction of Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) by the Government effective January 2008. This will further enhance access, equity and quality in all public secondary schools.

Although there is near-gender parity in the primary education cycle, the lower scholastic progression rate for girls from primary to secondary education means that the gender ratios are not maintained at the secondary school level. The relatively low access of girls to post secondary tertiary educational institutions is largely determined by their performance, attitude and the choice of subjects in secondary education(which may be limited by facilities e.g. laboratories).Other household-based factors including the number of girls who get married after secondary school, contribute to low gender parity in tertiary institutions.

The commitment of the government in the provision of education is reflected in the relatively large and consistent resource allocation to the sector. The share of education in total government spending (both recurrent and development) has ranged between 27.3% and 29.6% over the last five year. In addition, a significant proportion of the development fund such as the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) and Local Authority Transfer Fund (LATF) have been funding education related activities.

Gender equality and women's empowerment interventions

In education enrolment, retention, completion and progression rate for boys and girls at primary and secondary levels, are almost equal in Kenya. At the national level, gross

enrolment ratio at the secondary school level showed a slight improvement from 27.7% in 2003 to 32.2% in 2006 and 36.8% in 2007.

On average male labour force participation rates in the modern sector have remained higher than those for females and the gap has not changed much over the years. Women constitute 30% of the modern sector labour force and has remained so for the last five years, and only showed a marginal increase in 2006 and 2007. Women's participation in leadership and decision making has made some progress in the recent past although a lot still needs to be done. The number of women members of parliament doubled from 9 in 1997 to 18 in the 2002 General Election, and went up further to 19 after the 2007 General Election. Though rising, women elected to parliament still constitute only 9% of total elected members of Parliament. This progress has not been confined to the National Assembly, but is also reflected in the various positions and appointments in the public service including parastatals, the judiciary and local authorities. The judiciary has the highest share of women in senior positions in government. In 2007, there were 215 women serving as judges and magistrates, representing about 37.3% of the total personnel

Glaring gender gaps exist in access to and control of resources, economic opportunities (e.g. labour market), power and political voice. Though women constitute slightly over half of Kenya's population, women continue to have less access to social services and productive resources than men. Men own an estimated 95% of all landholdings in Kenya while women own only 5%. Majority of women are engaged in subsistent and

smallholder agricultural production. Currently, about 70% of the country's marked agricultural production is contributed by smallholder farmers depending largely on household labour inputs by women

Despite the existence of the policies, legislative reforms, plans and programmes, gender disparities still exist in legal, social, economic and political levels of participation in decision making, access to and control of resources, opportunities and benefits. Overall the implementation of policies and laws has been slow; a situation attributed to gaps in the laws, delayed enactment gender related legislations and lack of comprehensiveness in content for the same laws

Research Methods.

The research project *Gender, education and global poverty reduction initiatives* has been designed by a team of researchers at universities in South Africa, Kenya and the UK. Through the research project we want to find out what people working in national and provincial education departments, schools and in NGOs think about global declarations that have been made concerning gender equality, education and poverty. We are interested in how people see these statements, whether they do or do not connect with their day-to-day work, and the reasons for this.

This project aims to examine initiatives at the national, provincial and school level geared towards the implementation of global declarations aimed at advancing gender equality in schools in contexts of poverty. The project is set in Kenya and South Africa and involves five case studies in each country (Ministry of Education, Provincial Education office,

Local NGO, National NGO and one Primary school). At the school level the aim of the project is to:

- Examine ways in which teachers, parents and the local community engage with the idea of global declarations on gender, education and poverty
- To explore the ways in which the policies formulated at the global and national levels does and does not reach the schools and the local communities
- To understand what the people working at the school level think about the global declarations, how they try to implement them, the obstacles/challenges they face and whether they feel included in the formulation and implementation of global and national policies.

This research project is set in Kenya and South Africa, two countries where reforming governments have sought to put in place initiatives regarding gender equality and education. In both countries a vibrant civil society has critically engaged with government policy, sometimes by direct appeal to global policy as a terrain of critical engagement. Two of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) contain commitments to aspects of gender equality in schools. Further aspirations are detailed in the Dakar Framework for Action (2000) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action (1995). In each country case study research looks at initiatives at national, provincial and local level to bring about change in relation to poverty, gender and school. Case studies have been selected as the appropriate research method because they allow examination of the nuance of ideas, meanings being negotiated and the ways in which political, economic and social conditions bear on formulations of policy and action.

The research sites have been selected by the researchers in Kenya and South Africa as key settings in which the aims of the project and the organizations selected connect. In each country two case studies will be of organisations working at national level, one of a provincial education department and two of local level initiatives. Data collection at the

provincial education department began in September 2008 and continued at Kajiado District education office till mid June 2009. In total seven officers were interviewed at the PDE's office and seven at the district education office in Kajiado. Another 6 officers participated in the Focus group discussion in Kajiado. A report back held on 8th June 2009 had 9 officers in attendance drawn from the DEO's office, Children's department and Social welfare services departments.

On the whole, the officers at this level were more receptive of the research. They accepted to be interviewed at short notice and were quite sincere and reflective of the issues being addressed by the research. A good number of the officers were aware of government policies relating to education although they acknowledged that these policies were not being implemented according to plan due to a number of challenges faced on a daily basis.

Findings

Gender, Education and Poverty in the Provincial and District Education Departments

There is no clear link in most cases between these three concepts. In most cases poverty is considered to be the main cause of lack of children's access to education. Hence officers are quick to describe or identify how poverty in terms of lack of schools fees is affecting school enrolment. There is a belief that if children do not get education then poverty becomes automatic. One officer said: "Without proper education poverty sets in automatically"

The poverty index is generally considered high in the province especially in some districts. Where there is extreme poverty there is tendency to send the boy child to school to the exclusion of the girls child as this female staff observed:

The issue of poverty also affects the general community not only the girls.. The poverty levels in some areas are very high... when the income is less in a family the preference is given to the boys and the girl is the one who will be sacrificed... parents give out girls to become househelps hence gender inequality in the treatment of children.

The manifestations of poverty identified by interviewees include:

- Lack of money to pay for school levies or fees, or buy the necessary resources such as school uniforms
- Lack of food in the families
- Incidences of child labour
- School drop out
- Lack of land ownership (in most parts of this province people live as squatters in large farms formally owner by Europeans)

Whereas these are considered signs of poverty in the provincial/district that affect children's access to education there is also a debate on who should be described as poor among pastoralist communities whose wealth is equated with the herds of cattle one owns. At the time of collecting data in Kajiado district education office (November 2008) a report by the government of Kenya ranking parliamentary constituencies on poverty index had been withheld because some members of parliament complained that their areas were not projected as poor enough. However the Daily Nation Newspaper published the contents of the withheld report on Friday 29 August ,2009. Surprisingly Kajiado North (where the case study school is located) was rated the richest constituency followed by Kajiado Central (where the education offices are located).

When officers were asked to comment on the poverty index report most felt that whatever was reported did not actually represent the situation on the ground. What was considered

the richest constituency was where most children drop out of school when there is no school feeding programme and community members loose large herds of cattle due to prolonged drought because there is no water for their animals. So the interviewees speculated that the ranking may have been based on the availability of large tracts of non agriculture land which is not productive due to inadequate rainfall (see Interview transcripts with the Deputy District Education officer, Early childhood officer and Director gender and children's services in Kajiado district, notes on report back meeting).

Interviews from the districts therefore raise question regarding the definition of poverty and who can be categorized as poor and rich. In some cases the parents in Kajiado are not considered very poor not to be able to afford their children's education but that their cultural values and traditions affect their perceptions regarding western education. In other words it is considered prestigious to marry off a young girl to acquire more herds of cattle than sending them to school. There are some interviewees from Kajiado who tried to explain why it was rank the richest constituency.

I would like to clarify that issue where normally Kajiado people are referred as having a large number of livestock and land, those were the things that were categorise Kajiado as the richest. But in fact in the real sense, Kajiado people lost their animals in the year 2005 we lost 70% of the animals that we have .So at an average at present a family which is termed as rich have an average 20 heads of cattle. Now if a rich family can only have 20 heads of cattle and that is where they get their school fees, their food and all their basic needs , and a cow can go up to may be an average a cow can cost about 15,000 if it is 15,000 and may be a family has got about 4 children in secondary school, how are they going to use the 20 cows to feed their children, to educate them. And remember for a calf to grow to be a cow may be it is four years or three years, it is not enough (Female Officer).

There was a feeling among some officers that poverty levels had gone up especially after the post election violence. The province has been characterized by land clashes

in the run up to previous elections. A general feeling is that the indigenous ethnic groups-Kalenjin who were displaced during the colonial period have not received compensation several years after independence. The intensity of the violence experienced during post election violence was a result of the indigenous communities wanting to evict “foreigners out of the province so that they can get their land back.

An officer explained how the land issue is a problem in the province.

I think in this country access to land is a big issue. You see unless you have access to land you can't feed your family. Even if it rains you do not have anywhere to farm. In this town is where only a few people own land, which is not even farmed. It is bush land. The inequalities in land distribution have contributed to the problems we are experiencing in this province. And for the women it becomes worse when they are landless. You know they give birth to children whom they cannot feed (Male officer)

The research at the provincial and district education departments of education sought to find out the effect the government interventions were address gender inequality and inequity in education. The following anti poverty reduction initiatives were identified by the interviewees and are discussed here briefly.

- Free Primary Education launched in 2003
- Constituency development funds launched in 2003
- Women Enterprise Fund
- Youth Enterprise Fund
- School feeding programmes

Interviewees expressed different opinions regarding the contributions of these initiatives in eradicating poverty in general and addressing gender inequality. In this section each of these intervention are discussed and interviewees opinions regarding the extent they were addressing the challenges.

Free Primary Education

A few officers felt that FPE education had increased enrolment in the province and Kajiado district. Statistics obtained from the Ministry of Education offices showed that the primary school enrolment fluctuated from time to time. A summary of these statistics is given here.

Table 1 Primary completion rate by gender 2002-2007

Year	Rift valley province		Kajiado District	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
2002	69.1	64.0	51.7	45.6
2003	75.1	69.8	58.3	50.3
2004	84.1	76.6	66.7	54.0
2005	88.0	79.8	68.2	57.6
2006	88.1	78.1	72.9	61.6
2007	93.5	83.2	85.7	72.4

MOE: Education Information Management Systems

The data in the table show slightly lower completion rate for girls in the Rift Valley province. This trend is reflected at the district level as well. It suggests that not all children who enroll in primary school complete the cycle. However there appears to be an increase in the completion rate from 2005 after the introduction of FPE. There is concern for gender equality in enrolment, performance and transitions from the national government. But this concern and policy imperative is not backed up by appropriate interventions and programmes at the provincial and district education offices.

The data related to the transition relate from primary to secondary school shows that not all children enrolled are in primary school transit to secondary schools. There appears to be wastage along the way as children are not able to transit to secondary schools. The interviewees at the province and district level identified inadequate teachers as a factor affecting children's experience of quality education.

The disparities in the transition rate, completion and primary school enrolment suggests that FPE primary education as poverty reduction strategy has not been successful in addressing gender equity in its entirety in the Rift valley province and Kajiado district. Some officers alluded to the fact that there are still many children who are out of school due to other factors such as poverty and traditional cultural practices.

Cultural values are also blamed by the interviewees in the province and district education offices for gender inequality in education. Practices such as early marriages, FGM, Moranism are still very common. In some districts in the province these practices are held in high regard that attempts by government to rescue girls from early marriages are bearing little fruit. A senior education officer in the province explained how government efforts were being frustrated by entrenched cultural practices.

The government tries but there is resistance from some communities. We have tried to withdraw girls from early marriages and take them to rescue centers. These girls sneak out during the holidays and go to live with the men they had been married too. In the process they get pregnant and so when you want to withdraw them they tell you they are now somebody's wife and cant go back to school when they are pregnant. So you realize that the government's efforts do not bear fruit. Again there even government officials who do not report cases of early marriages even some teachers. People do not want to spoil the names of their relatives who are involved in such cases so you find men protecting others (Male officer).

Again the NGOs working in the district are considered by some to be taking the wrong approach in sensitizing community members about the ills of these practices hence strong resistance and persistence of the practices. Some interviewees (Early Childhood education officer) think that education if well resourced can be the best avenue for doing

away with these practices. This is because educated girls and women are empowered and therefore able to make informed decisions.

Free Primary education has not enabled all children to access education. This is because there are other costs to education that the government has not catered. For example, parents have to buy school uniforms for their children and also pay other levies to be able to support education especially buying desks and contributing to the construction of classrooms. Again places like Kajiado district that are vast do not have enough schools hence children have to walk long distances to school. One education officer said

This district is so vast and the distance between school and home is so wide and you see for us we say a child of seven years should start class one...but you realize that in the rural areas they wait till a child is ten years in order to enroll them in school because they are able to walk long distances.

Insecurity and distance from School has been found to affect children's access and retention in schools. Parents in ASAL areas of North Eastern, Eastern, Rift Valley and Coast indicated that distance from school coupled with insecurity in their region makes them not to send or withdraw their children from school. The fear that their children are exposed to dangers of being raped, kidnapped or even killed. Other causes of their fear were cattle rustling and raids by thugs (Chege and Sifuna, 2006).

Incidences of child labour are high in the province and district as families try to met their basic needs. Child labour has been found to be a factor limiting participation in education (Chege and Sifuna, 2006). Chege and Sifuna (2006) observe that the rapid growth in urbanization has increased the demand for domestic labour. In their survey of girls access

to education in Kenya they found out that poor households have responded by sending their daughters into the domestic labour market in exchange for regular cash income. This draws young girls away from schools. Poverty is also contributing to the increase in prostitution and child labour

Poverty is a major contributing factor to prostitution though in Maasai land we don't have that due to poverty .We are now seeing a Maasai woman doing prostitution and you see a mother sending her girl to go for men so that they can have a packet of *unga* (Maize meal) at the end of the day because you know you don't have any other source of income (female officer).

The findings from this study suggest that poverty prevents parents from sending their children to school. Maile (2008) observes that access to education is limited by family financial resources such that a poor family is prevented from investing in the education of their children by lack of financial resources

School Feeding Programme.

This programmes falls under the government's policy framework *School Health Nutrition and Feeding*. Some of the programmes in this framework include; provision of midday meal to 1.1 million pre-primary and primary school children in 29 ASAL districts and Nairobi slums; supporting sustainability activities for the school-feeding programme and de-worming of school children. Others include collaboration with the ministry of health in undertaking supplementary immunization activities, including vaccination of school age girls of child bearing age with Tetanus Toxoid in high risk maternal and neonatal tetanus disease districts.

This is an intervention geared towards providing a mid day meal for pupils enrolled in primary school in the poverty stricken districts and also semi arid areas where people are

considered to be food poor. According to the interviewees at the district education office the school feeding program had in some cases led to increased enrolment of pupils in primary school. An officer observed:

When we have school feeding programme in place you see a number of children the enrolment goes up. A division like Magadi few schools like Maiwa we realize that even children that are not officially enrolled in school when it is lunch time they come to school (Education Officer).

However, the management and supply of this programmes was facing a number of challenges. Interviewees alluded to delayed disbursement of food and mismanagement in some areas. The issue of sustainability of school feeding programmes was also raised by respondents. One officer observed:

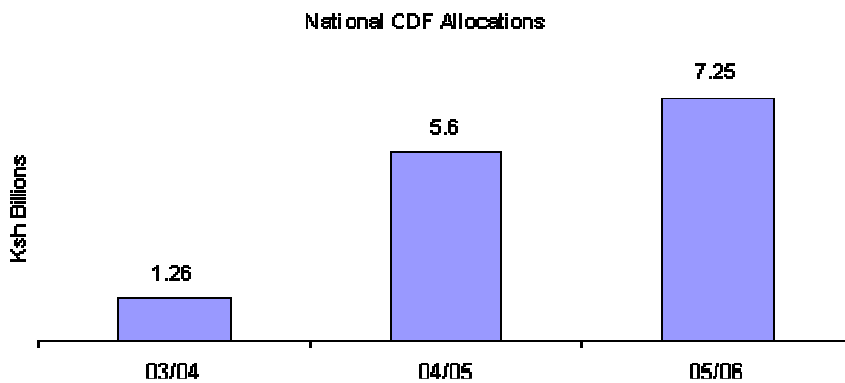
The evidence is overwhelming that school enrolment almost triples when there is school feeding programme. One major challenge is that the school feeding programme is being sponsored by NGOs. When these NGOs withdrew, because these programmes were not going for long. That is when the problem begins. Now there was the whole issue of sustainability, and it was agreed that actually communities now, would need to own this school feeding programmes in terms of providing labour for the cooks, in terms of even growing food as we have said. So sustainability was actually the problem. The NGO will go for three years then they go to another place, so when they go the children also drop out of school. (Male officer).

Constituency development fund (CDF)

The Constituency Development Fund (CDF) was established in 2003 through the CDF Act in The Kenya Gazette Supplement No. 107 (Act No. 11) of 9th January 2004. The fund aims to control imbalances in regional development brought about by partisan politics. It targets all constituency-level development projects, particularly those aiming to combat poverty at the grassroots. The fund comprises an annual budgetary allocation equivalent to 2.5% of the government's ordinary revenue. A motion seeking to increase

this allocation to 7.5% of government's revenue was recently in parliament in 2007. 75% of the fund is allocated equally amongst all 210 constituencies. The remaining 25% is allocated as per constituency poverty levels. A maximum 10% of each constituency's annual allocation may be used for an education bursary scheme. CDF is managed through 4 committees 2 of which are at the national level, and 2 at the grassroots level.

Figure 1 National CDF Allocations 2003-2006



(Constituency development fund website. [Http://www.cdf.go.ke](http://www.cdf.go.ke))

At the national level the fund is managed by a select Committee of the National Assembly that draws its membership from sitting members of parliament charged with the responsibility of overseeing the implementation of the CDF Act, 2003 and its subsequent amendments (CDF Amendment Act 2007) and overseeing the policy framework and legislative matters that may arise in relation to the Fund. The CDF has been considered a milestone in terms of contributing towards development at the grassroots levels. A number of projects have been undertaken in the various constituencies ranging from infrastructure development , construction of social amenities such as hospital and

schools. However, the management and utilization of these funds has faced a number of challenges.

A Kenya Institute of Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA) (2008) analysed baseline data and the additional data gathered through focus group discussions. This analysis identified a number challenges. First it was revealed that the Act of Parliament that created the fund gave immense power to the local Member of Parliament (MP) who uses these funds to reward his supporters and benefit their relatives. There is a general lack of transparency and accountability probably due to the blending of supervisory and implementing roles.

Secondly in terms of fund implementation poor awareness by community members and fund managers of their roles and responsibilities in the governance of funds has contributed to poor performance and in some cases a complete failure of the funds. Poor participation, particularly for marginalized groups, results in poor prioritization of projects and exclusion. Another challenge is in the area of monitoring and evaluation. There is a lack of professional and technical supervision, which has led to poor project quality. In addition, there is low community participation in monitoring and evaluation due to the inadequacy of data and general information about the funds. There is general misconception by community members that funds are 'free' or are the personal gifts from the political leaders. Poor monitoring and evaluation has led to abuse of funds and fostered a sense of impunity amongst the perpetrators. Research conducted by the Ministry of Planning and Vision 2030 in early 2009 found that up to 20% funds are sunk into projects that really do not add value or are diverted to other courses leading to

wastage. (Kenya Television Network 9.00pm news, reported by Peter Okaba in business news 16/6/2009).

The interviewees of this study at the Provincial and district education offices were asked for their views concerning the role of CDF in poverty reduction and improving access to universal primary education. Some felt that CDF is assisting Kajiado district to expand secondary education through construction of classrooms as this officer explained:

We are happy with CDF. Member of Parliament and other organizations have put up some schools. So the beginning of this year only Kajiado north constituency has put five secondary schools using CDF funds. (Male officer).

CDF is also considered a political intervention used by politicians to reward their cronies hence not benefiting the local community. As one female officer said:

CDF was a good idea . It is still very good project for one it is in touch with the rural people, the grassroot it is completely in touch but the problem is they need to detouch it from politicians because it is more political than it is supposed to be social. It is not community owned. If you go out in the rural you will find a classroom sponsored by CDF but it is a shoddy job done, not well done because the politician had an upper hand so he looked for his own contractor it is not long lasting work. You will find a dispensary constructed but it is a white elephant no doctor, no drugs, no nothing it is only the gazelles that live there with hyenas. So CDF to be honest is a good programme but they need to restructure it, they need to involve women in such committees (Female officer).

Corruption was seen by most interviewees as contributing towards most vulnerable children and families not accessing the anti poverty reduction initiatives. As one education officer observed:

But we know that the money is spent badly and there is a lot of nepotism. The MP chooses committees made of his clan. So there is no transparency. The CDF money is stolen and used to please the campaigners or supporters of the MP. What happened is that the thief's were changed from the headquarters to the local level? So the venue and actors of corruption were changed. It is a desperate situation I do not know how we can help the poor people (Male Office).

CDF bursaries meant to benefit the needy children are given to the politician's family

members and friends. One officer wondered:

I always ask myself who was representing these in CDF committee when they were giving out the bursary, because you find that children of the rich are being given the money and they are leaving out children of the poor, I can give a very good example of a person who owns almost 12 buildings and then the child is given Ksh 120,000 and then a child from a poor family are left out Those who received were given either Ksh 5,000 or Ksh 20,000.

On the whole it appears the CDF is not translating into gains for the poor and marginalized in the province and also the district in general but also it is not addressing gender inequality. It continues to benefit a few who hold the power to control how these funds are distributed and who benefits from them.

Women Enterprise Fund

A World Bank assessment on Gender and Growth states that while 70 percent of total medium sized enterprise (MSME) employment is generated by male-owned MSMEs, only 30 percent is generated by female-owned MSMEs. The report argues that women in Kenya face more severe legal, regulatory and administrative barriers to starting and running businesses than do their male counterparts.

Women Enterprise Fund (WEF) was conceived by the Government of Kenya in 2006 and officially launched in 2007. The principal objective of the fund is economic empowerment of women. The funds motto is very appropriate, “YOU EMPOWER A WOMAN, YOU HAVE EMPOWERERED FAMILY & WHOLE NATION”. The fund is geared towards enabling the government realize the 3rd Millennium Development Goal (MDG) on “Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women”. In recognition of the critical role women play in socio-economic development, the WEF has been identified as a flagship project under the social pillar in the Vision 2030. It is expected that the fund

will play a catalytic role in mainstreaming women in the formal financial services sector.

The fund is designed to address the perennial challenges women face in their desire to venture in income generating activities including:

- Cultural factors in the Kenyan society that does not allow women to own assets which are required by banks to access credit. Some widows are disinherited by in-laws.
- High transaction cost including high Interest rates and bank charges. and access costs and transport costs.
- There are also Myths about banks – Few banks have outlets in the rural areas. The society’s negative perception about banks e.g. repossession of assets incase of default, not “poor” friendly, etc.

As at February, 2009 a total of Kshs.586 Million had been loaned to women, broken down as kshs.449 Million through Financial Institutions (FIs) and Ksh. 137 Million through C-WES. A total of 67,180 women have benefited from the WEF through both the financial intermediaries and the C-WES (*Daily Nation Thursday (Online News Paper June 25, 2008 available at www.nation.co.ke/news).*

When interviewees were asked whether the fund was contributing to the empowerment of women, they had mixed responses. One woman said:

Not really because when the proposal was put across it raised a lot of expectations we received quite a number of applications it was until last week but we saw a letter and a list of groups that were given the fifty thousand ...but it wasn't evenly distributed because the only groups that got were just from Ngong division which is in Kajiado North Constituency so it was only women from one constituency that received the fund. And here in central it is only last week as I said we saw a list of not less than five women groups that got the fifty thousand (Female officer).

The loans given through the Women and Youth enterprise funds were also seen to disadvantage people from the district as one interviewee observed:

And also because they are given in terms of loans, there is a question of the duration. You find the target group may not be able to invest within that time...Even the one that is given at the banks the youth have to produce security

collateral. Most of them don't have these requirements. So they end up not accessing that funds yet it is there.

Again the interviewees felt that there was not adequate sensitisation and involvement of the people at the grassroots when these funds were being developed

That is why I said may be signing for these funds there is need for the target group to be sincerely involved in the design For example the once that we take in Kajiado district, like livestock we take some money and buy some steers (male bovine that are castrated before sexual maturity, esp. one raised for beef.) keep them until may be they grow to a certain level and sale them. It can take around one year or 9 months for the steers to grow. So suppose the calamities come like now, they die. So you find that most of them buy the steers and when there is drought you find that they loose almost everything. So when it comes to repayment it becomes a problem because they don't have anything.

Some of the interventions are launched without grassroots people being aware of them.

Even the senior officers at the provincial and district levels who are supposed to implement them are not aware of them as one officer explained.

Actually we were not consulted, but we were just told, that is why I said the project has to involve its target group at least at its own set so that it is owned because when a policy is made in the head office and then people at grassroots are just told come we launch it becomes difficult for people to own them.

The views of the interviewees suggest that the women enterprise fund is as currently managed and administered does not address poverty concerns at the grassroots. Again there have been concerns raised by men tot eh effect that the empowerment of women through small medium enterprises is leading to family disputes because husbands want to control the loans given to their wives. Some men have argued for the establishment of a men's fund as well to avoid discrimination against men.

Youth Enterprise Development Fund

The Youth Enterprise Development Fund was conceived in June 2006 by the government as a strategic move towards arresting unemployment which is virtually a youth problem. Seventy five percent (75%) of those unemployed are the youth. The government set aside Kenya shillings One billion (Ksh. 1 billion) in the 2006/07 budget to fast-track this noble and timely initiative.

The Fund was gazetted on 8th December 2006 to provide the necessary legal framework to govern its use and operations. The Fund facilitates youth employment through enterprise development and structured labour export. The 11-member Advisory Board of the Fund was gazetted on 31st January 2007 and is 60% private sector dominated.

The Youth Enterprise Development Fund was officially launched on 1st February 2007 by His Excellency President Mwai Kibaki. This launch marked the beginning of the Fund disbursement process to the youth enterprises through the Financial Intermediaries and the Constituency Youth Enterprise Scheme. To ensure equity in the distribution the Fund, the following criteria has been used:

- The first half of the Fund (Ksh. 345 million) has been divided equally to all districts
- The second half of the Fund (Ksh. 345 million) has been divided as a factor of the population of young people in each district

For one to qualify for the fund they need to meet the following criteria.

- One must fall in the age bracket of 18 to 35 years and Kenyan.
- One must have the intention of investing the Fund in a business venture.
- The Fund is a loan and must therefore be repaid.
- Any form of legally registered organization or firm operating in Kenya

The Youth Enterprise Fund has also faced a number of challenges including corruption. The interviewees at the district report also raised concerns about the terms and conditions not being suitable for the youth in the district. Some of the youth had not been consulted regarding the suitable income generating activities and the duration of repayment. One officer said:

But now as for what it will entail, they youth only heard about it at the time it is being launched... they have not been asked in public forums how it would work (Male officer).

Conclusion

The government of Kenya has introduced a number of poverty reduction initiatives since 2003 geared towards the realization of Vision 2030. Some of these initiatives target the education sector as a venue for reducing poverty in households. However, governance, corruption and inefficient use of public resources still remain critical barriers to the achievement of the national targets of poverty reduction. Attempts to empower the youth and women at the grassroots continue to face a number of challenges. Generally community awareness and involvement has been low, and the funds are seen to have had little impact on the quality of life of the population, partly due to inadequate allocations. Communities have questioned the various processes in identification and implementation of projects, as well as the monitoring and evaluation of projects and funds, and have expressed concerns about accountability and transparency. The following suggestions are given for the improvement of policy and practice:

- For the interventions to address gender issues and reduce poverty there is need for policy makers to be involved in public discussions with the beneficiaries in order

to identify what works, how it works and under what circumstances. These discussions are important because there are diverse cultural values and regional disparities that can not be ignored in the implementation of these strategies.

- The choice of anti poverty interventions should be based on inclusive, extensive and thorough discussions about their goals, who they are meant for and how they can be implemented and monitored.
- Poverty reduction needs to be tackled on all fronts because without the poor being able to meet the basic needs such as health and housing, poor households tend to trade of education against other needs. The poverty reduction initiatives should be accompanied by clear legislation and frameworks which champion gender equality in order to girls and women to benefit from education and other social services offered by the government. As Sayed (2008,p.65) says ‘ poverty eradication and elimination is not something which is done to people-it is something that people who are poor need to be centrally involved in’ According to Sayed involvement is vital in ensuring that differences for the poor are explicitly recognized and acknowledged in policy planning.

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